

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 008993

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/SE; EUR/PPD; EB

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KPAO AF PREL SOCI TU](#)

SUBJECT: TELLING THE STORY OF AFGHAN RECONSTRUCTION IN TURKEY

REF: (A) SECSTATE 251091;(B) ANKARA 8699

1. Post appreciates message of sustained interest in telling the story of US efforts in Afghan reconstruction. Turkey has a long historical tie to Afghanistan and is proud of its current status as a leader in Afghan reconstruction. Our responsibility is to demonstrate to the Turkish populace that this is a cooperative effort, that the US is going to stick with the program, and that we appreciate the role of democratic, secular and Muslim Turkey in the effort.

2. Turks have ties of blood and cultural history with many of the ethnic groups in Afghanistan. As Turkey modernized under progressive Sultans, the Young Turks, and finally under Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, there were close relationships with reforming elements in Afghanistan. Many Afghans studied in Turkey throughout the 20th century. Turkish schools and hospitals operated during most of the 23 years of bloodshed in Afghanistan. The survival of a secular state in a Muslim Afghanistan is important to the Turkish state.

3. Turks are not just observers of Afghan reconstruction. They are taking a lead alongside the USA in the effort. They follow closely all aspects of recovery: political developments, humanitarian needs, security concerns, and regional influences. Turks are the current leaders of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Kabul - a major commitment of troops and resources. Within days of the fall of the Taliban, Turkish cabinet officers and senior military leaders were in Kabul. Turkish NGOs and GOT assistance elements have been working to re-establish Turkish hospitals and schools throughout the northern provinces and in the capital. The Ataturk Children's Hospital was up and running during the first days of liberation. During the past year Afghan military, police, diplomatic and health officials have had training programs in Turkish counterpart ministries. The Turkish private sector has looked for openings and world-class Turkish construction companies are on site, even taking a part in the building of USG buildings in Afghanistan.

4. What are the primary misconceptions of U.S. objectives in Afghanistan? More than misconceptions, Turks have serious concerns about the impact that the pursuing of U.S. objectives will lead. Turks fully recognize that U.S. leadership in Afghan reconstruction is a potent catalyst necessary to convince other countries and institutions to contribute to the effort. They view generous U.S. financial contributions as a powerful and much-appreciated example. But . (a) There is Turkish concern is that their generosity will be overshadowed by the U.S. (b) Their greatest fear is that the US will lose interest, will redirect its energy and funds to a war on Iraq, and leave Turkey "holding the bag" or simply leave the Afghans to fall back into chaos. Turks cite American "abandonment" of Afghanistan once the Soviets were eliminated. They also note the US failure to "finish off" Saddam in 1992 and their much-repeated complaint that America drew Turkey into the Gulf War with promises of rebuilding a new Iraq only to leave Turkey with 10's of billions of dollars in lost trade with a sanctioned Iraq. Within the Turkish society there are Islamist elements who do hold serious misconceptions. There is a vocal minority among them who still believe that our initiatives against al-Qaeda and Iraq are really efforts to destroy Islam and to grab the oil wealth of Islamic peoples.

5. Which reconstruction story would elicit the most positive response in Turkey? (a) Any effective message delivered in Turkey on Afghan reconstruction must acknowledge Turkey's longstanding and generous efforts in Afghanistan. Even during a serious financial crisis, the Turks have given substantially to help the Afghans. For us to focus on US assistance without recognizing Turkish donations of training on site and in Turkish universities, food, seed, medicine and baby food, without referring to the pioneering effort of the Turkish-Afghan business Council and a variety of Turkish

NGOs would detract from the credibility of any American message. We must show that we are doing is in a cooperative nature along with the Turks. For Turkish TV, Betacam-sp clips that showed Turks and American working together, then going on to things that we are doing by ourselves, would be effective. (b) We must also stress the fact that we are NOT going to withdraw, but that we are pledged to stay and have made investments that mean that we will stay. (Statements by senior USG officials, visuals of buildings and investments that illustrate a continuing commitment - perhaps American moving from trailers into permanent structures) will all help. (c) We had one of Turkey's top journalists, one with a real interest in Afghanistan (Ferai Tinc of "Hurriyet") ready to participate in the recently-cancelled "Afghan Road Show" to be led by DEPSECDEF Wolfowitz. If the project is revisited with the same leadership, there would be a real Turkish interest - we just need to have some recognition during the trip for the Turkish reconstruction effort. (d) When Operation Enduring Freedom began, there was a long delay between the time that food drops to Afghan citizens began and footage of those drops became available to post and/or Turkish media. Thus the plentiful visuals of our bombs falling on Afghans, not our aid reaching them, shaped the public image of OEF. Now there is good material available on how we are helping the Afghans we need to keep up the flow. Betacam-SP quality and Turkish language dubbing will greatly increase the likelihood of placement.

PEARSON